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The International Planned Parenthood Federation

ASPECTS OF ITS HISTORY*

I HAVE BEEN ASKED to speak this morning about the I.P.P.F.'s history. But histories can be dull. How, I asked myself, could I avoid boring you with a dry recital of bare facts—facts about the dates and places of conferences, the number of attending delegates, the countries represented, the resolutions passed, etc. How could I avoid incurring the charge levelled against a certain Oxford professor that, in a lengthy syllabus, he made everything seem equally unimportant?

I decided to try to do three things: first to relate the developments of our movement to the successive world events to which it has reacted; second to describe how closely our respective countries—the U.S.A. and the U.K.—have worked together; and third to give you some first-hand experiences of people and events. But a word first about my title to speak on this subject at all.

I first became involved in the birth control movement as a medical student some forty years ago, and when I look round the world to-day I find that there are few people with such a long first-hand experience. In 1953, when a governing body of the I.P.P.F. was first established, I was appointed its Vice-Chairman. I held this position until 1959, when I was put into a then newly-created post—that of Administrative Chairman—which I occupied till I resigned at the end of 1960. The I.P.P.F., having been founded in 1952, has existed for twelve years. Hence I have been one of its honorary officers, holding certain administrative responsibilities, for the first eight of these years.

I will divide my cursory review into three parts: the long period before 1939; the decade which followed the end of the Second World War (1945-54); and the next decade (1955-64) which brings us to the present day. A valuable survey of the I.P.P.F.'s history has recently been written by Mrs. Vera Houghton. It was published in THE EUGENICS REVIEW (1961-62, **53**, 149-53, 201-7).

It is the story before 1955 that I am best qualified by my age to tell. I will speak, from the standpoint of an Englishman, of events wholly enacted in the Old World which I think might be of interest to Americans. I will speak much of Americans but little of America.

Period before 1939

I commend the account of this period which is given by Dr. Norman Himes in his *Medical History of Contraception*, first published in 1936. The publication of a new edition of this work†, with an ably written introduction by Dr. Alan Guttmacher, is an imaginative and valuable enterprise for which your *Committee on Maternal Health* deserves credit and thanks. In Dr. Himes's words, the course of events in the last century "oscillates between England and the United States." I will try to convince you that this oscillation has continued to the present day.

In England, Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and Francis Place (1771-1854) were contemporaries for sixty-three years, Place having been born five years after the other. The ball was then, so to speak, propelled across the Atlantic where the

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† See THE EUGENICS REVIEW, 1964. **55**, 238.

influence of this couple was felt by two somewhat younger Americans—R. D. Owen (1801-1877) and Charles Knowlton (1800-1850). Owen had, early in his life, spent some time in Switzerland and France. Both these men, you will remember, recommended techniques of contraception; and you will recall how there was a second crossing of the Atlantic, from west to east, when Knowlton's pamphlet, with the now-queer-sounding title *The Fruits of Philosophy*, was published in England. It was this event which provoked the celebrated Bradlaugh-Besant trial. The decline of Britain's birth rate began soon after. Thus did the ball come back to the Old World where things began to move in various European countries.

As you know better than I, Mrs. Margaret Sanger embarked on her crusade and life-work before the first war. Her friendship with Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) began before 1914. I did not know either in those days. But I was with them when they met in the middle twenties. I recall the warmth of their regard for each other and the easy flow of their conversation in the course of which Margaret's prison experiences were lightly touched. Here was another interchange between our two countries. At this time Ellis was in his early seventies; his flowing white beard and gentle manner well befitted his reputation, by then world wide, as a sage. I later saw him fairly often and corresponded with him. He was critical of the report of the (British) Brock Committee on voluntary sterilization (1934) which had recommended that, as a strictly voluntary measure, sterilization should be formally legalized. Ellis strongly held that such a step was unnecessary and would do more harm than good. Subsequent experience suggests that, in certain contexts but not in all, his views were realistic. They have prevailed, for example, in India but not in Sweden.

I first met Margaret Sanger in connection with the important World Population Conference, which met in Geneva during the summer of 1927. This was convened by her and was the first of its comprehensive kind ever held. Among Margaret's closest friends in England were Clinton and Janet Chance, whom I am happy to recall. Clinton Chance, an able organizer and business man, had much to do with the preparation of the Geneva conference. Indeed, Mrs. Sanger mentioned his name first, together with that of Edith How-Martyn, when expressing thanks to helpers in her preface to the volume of *Proceedings*. She said that these two—

> co-operated with me throughout and devoted over a year to the preliminary preparation of the Conference.

In a sense the preparation was too well done. The wide preliminary publicity attracted the notice of those who, for religious or political reasons, were opposed to Margaret's ideas. Time was given for opponents to take steps to neutralize her objective. The purpose of the conference was finally declared to be the *study* of population problems; discussion of *solutions* of these problems was ruled out of order. Mrs. Sanger who, with friends, had raised the money and done the work, was quietly pushed into the background and was never given the opportunity to speak. But the conference ended well for her. In a closing address, when it was too late for "objections" to be raised, Sir Bernard Mallet, the conference's president, whom I later came to know intimately, said:

> I cannot sit down without an expression, perhaps too long delayed, of admiration for the work of Mrs. Sanger, and of recognition to her husband, whose genial presence and generous hospitality have done so much to smooth away difficulties.*

The words "too long delayed" came from the heart, for Sir Bernard was well aware of all that Margaret had done. There was another pleasing episode—quite unrehearsed. At a concluding gala dinner at which the guests were seated at separate tables Sir Bernard made a speech in the course of which he expressed thanks to various people. A recital of names was tepidly received until he came to Mrs. Sanger's. Clapping began at a certain table which was slowly taken up at other tables. The crescendo was quite slow. But it steadily mounted until about a third of the company stood up and cheered.

This conference provided a further example of Anglo-American co-operation. In his inaugural address on the first day, Sir Bernard declared that

> the first suggestion for the present conference came from certain well-known scientists in the United States of America who then approached,

* *Proceedings:* p. 356.

> and found an eager response from, their British colleagues. This [he added] will account for what some will no doubt consider an undue predominance of the Anglo-Saxon element in our councils.†

At least two organizations were (so to speak) conceived at this conference held during 1927 in Geneva. One survives and flourishes. It is the *International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.* This union was formed in 1928 and has now become an important though somewhat technical professional organization of demographers. I may mention, jumping twenty-six years that, in 1954, this union gave valued help to the United Nations in promoting a second world conference on population which was held in the palatial headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. And a tremendous conference it was. One of its most memorable features was a reception of the participants in the Basilica of St. Peter by the Pope, who addressed to us words of greeting and encouragement. The I.P.P.F.'s Governing Body held its second meeting in Rome after this Conference. Mrs. Sanger was not present. But in so far as the Demographers' *International Union* was jointly responsible for the Rome conference, and in so far as the *Union* can be counted as one of Margaret's unplanned progeny, so can we assign to Margaret some ancestral responsibility for the Rome gathering in 1954.

I now move back to Geneva and 1927. It was there that I first met Abraham Stone who became a close friend. It was an inexhaustible pleasure to meet him at ensuing conferences before and after the second war. His modesty, charm and lucidity as a writer caused him to be widely honoured outside no less than inside the I.P.P.F. He was singled out by invitation to give a paper to the austere Rome Conference just mentioned on the delicate subject of *Present Day Family Planning Techniques.* The conference as a whole was almost as allergic to anything classifiable as "Malthusian propaganda" as had been the earlier conference in Geneva. Hence Abraham was on dangerous ground. But his tact was perfect. There were no complaints such as would have erupted at Geneva in 1927. To Abraham Stone I pay this rare tribute that, having sat with him at numerous committees and other gatherings, I *never once* heard him make a contribution which was not to the point, conciliatory and, in a welcome sense, constructive. I was always glad to hear him intervene. The future historian of our early years will accord him a place second only to Mrs. Sanger's.

In 1930 a conference was held in Zürich. It was very different from that held three years before in Geneva, for it was attended only by supporters of birth control. My main impression of this conference was the vigour of the German delegation several of whom were not seen again after the war.

I now turn to world events to which our movement reacted. The two world wars have had quite different aftermaths. Some ten years after the first there set in the economic depression which brought world-wide suffering. It was the deprivation and hardship, mainly affecting families with numerous children, which gave impetus to the birth control movement. Clinics, sometimes federated under umbrella organizations, came into existence in several countries. Sympathy for the unemployed grew and became widespread. But the depression had a second consequence. I refer to the decline in birth rates throughout the "western" world. The hardships caused by the depression were slowly realized as the conditions worsened. By contrast, the demographic implications of the fall of the birth rate were realized later and with dramatic suddenness. In the U.K. the moment occurred in the second half of 1936. The story, which is rather peculiar, may not bore you. There were published at about the same time in that year three books (by Kuczynski, Carr-Saunders and Glass) which drew attention to the now-obvious fact that, though births still at that time exceeded deaths, the population would, if trends then current persisted, soon fail to replace itself. A glance at the population pyramid based on the 1931 census, undercut like a Christmas tree in its lower tiers, provided a convincing visual demonstration. These three books were reviewed in two consecutive articles which appeared on successive days—28th and 29th September, 1936—in *The Times* of London. It is interesting to

† *Ibid:* p. 17.

note to-day how these articles over-stated the case. They concluded that—

> there is no evidence that the British race will maintain its numbers in the future. Far from it: its numbers will certainly fall, perhaps catastrophically, during the next fifty years.

These two articles came as a sort of national shock. They made widely known something which had before been understood by but a handful of demographers. The articles received a wide publicity and were much quoted in the provincial press of the U.K. I have a volume of press cuttings which leave no doubt of their effects.

There quickly ensued a general revaluation in which our movement participated. One of the effects was that the term *birth control* fell into disfavour and was replaced by the expression "Family Planning"; voluntary bodies which had previously called themselves birth control associations changed their names to family planning associations.

Services for the diagnosis and treatment of infertility, designed to help parents to have children and therefore to raise fertility, were established alongside contraceptive services, so that the family planning movement became two-sided. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that, almost overnight, an over-population scare was transformed into a depopulation scare.

Not long after came the war when family planning and most other pre-war interests were driven out of our heads. There were many differences between the two wars, and one was in the ways they ended. The first ended suddenly and to everyone's astonishment. Indeed, we were caught on the wrong foot with no proper schemes for demobilization ready. The second war was different. The scales were turned at Stalingrad and in North Africa; and by the beginning of 1944 it was obvious what the ending would be. It was but a question of time. The British Government took advantage of this forewarning by appointing in 1944, a Royal Commission on Population. Its original object was to try to forestall a post-war decline of the country's population. But half way through its deliberations (its report was published in 1949) the sign-post changed. Quite unlike what had happened during the first war, the birth rate took an upward turn in 1943 (the middle of the second war), and by 1947 it reached the highest figure since 1920.

The great depression which followed the first war began in 1929—some ten years after its end. The corresponding year for the second war would have been 1956. But happily we were spared this spectral aftermath. However, something else happened. Instead of a global depression there befell another event universally acclaimed as welcome but nevertheless having disturbing features. I refer to the dramatic and world-wide falls in death rates. In under-developed countries these declining death rates and rocketting populations, have furnished a stronger argument for birth control than was produced by the economic depression after the first war. Indeed, the entirely unforeseen fall of the death rate has provided an unprecedented stimulus to the birth control movement. It has done more: it has created an urgency which would surely have seemed inconceivable to those who, in the late 'thirties, were predicting depopulation and the doom of capitalism.

First Post-War Decade (1945-54)

So I come back from world events to our movement. During the war rumours had reached me that Mrs. Sanger had been seriously ill. Hence it was a happy surprise indeed when, soon after 1945, she reappeared in London full of plans for the future. In 1946 Elise Ottesen Jensen (president of the Swedish Family Planning Association known as the R.F.S.U., and later Margaret Sanger's successor as the I.P.P.F.'s president) took steps to initiate an international organization. That the possibilities might be discussed, she invited to a conference in Stockholm representatives of European organizations which, after the war, were reconstituting themselves, and also representatives from the United States. Thus in August 1946 was set up an interim international committee which could later be replaced by something permanent. This project was carried out during the next year—1948—at a conference held at Cheltenham. The interim body was christened the International Committee on Planned Parenthood (I.C.P.P.) and consisted of representatives of but four countries—the United States, Britain, Sweden

and Holland. These four countries should not be forgotten in the palmy present when the I.P.P.F. has some thirty-five members. Then it was that Mrs. Sanger took another decision which further consolidated the relation between the U.S.A. and the U.K. She firmly resisted the suggestion, put to her by several people, mostly British, that if the U.S.A. were to provide most of the funds for an international organization, its headquarters should be in the United States. Mrs. Sanger would not hear of it. She insisted that the headquarters should be in London. Through the goodwill of Mrs. Dorothy Brush, the Foundation which bears her name provided generously; and the Eugenics Society, of which I was at that time secretary, provided office accommodation rent free.

Another world event which profoundly shaped the course of our movement was the acquisition of independence in 1947 by India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma. It is inconceivable that under the restraints of our Colonial Office these countries could have taken such vigorous initiatives. Mrs. Sanger, who had travelled much in Asia during the inter-war years, was not slow to perceive the newly disclosed openings. India, however, was in difficulties because of the standpoint of Mahatma Gandhi. Two trials of the rhythm method (directed by Abraham Stone under the auspices of the World Health Organization) clearly demonstrated that this method was not universally practicable. In 1951 the Bombay Family Planning Association—later to expand into the Family Planning Association of India—convened its first all-India conference. Mrs. Sanger saw the opportunity. She wired to the lady who is now the I.P.P.F.'s president suggesting that the next conference of the interim committee should be held in India. Thus originated the important Bombay conference of 1952 where the I.P.P.F., having been planned in 1946, was, in a working physiological sense, conceived. (It was born, properly constituted, in the following year).

This was a most memorable conference to which I cannot do justice in this cursory review. Two things stand out in my memory. The first was the magnitude and brilliance. The inaugural meeting in the massively domed and capacious Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall, its stalls and gallery packed to capacity, was ablaze with jewelled turbans and multi-coloured saris. The vice-president of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, opened with a speech which should receive prominence in any later edited symposium of noteworthy declarations in the movement's history. And it was then that we first saw that remarkable woman, Lady Rama Rau, in action. In an account of the conference written immediately afterwards I mentioned three out of many noteworthy impressions; the exceptional vitality, power of leadership and charm of Lady Rama Rau who, with Mrs. Sanger, was elected joint honorary president of the new Federation; the intelligence, common sense and realism of the many Indian observers and delegates (267 were recorded in the programme, most of them women); and the remarkable achievement of Mrs. Vera Houghton, by then secretary of the I.P.P.F., who had travelled ahead of the rest of us to help with the organization. Four new countries joined the Federation—India, Hong Kong, Singapore and Western Germany, taking the membership to eight.

I recall the irregular way that the foundations were laid of our regional organization. There was at this stage no Governing Body, no Executive or other committee and no responsible group. Decisions were taken informally by Mrs. Sanger who would call whom she pleased to her room in the Taj Mahal hotel. On leaving her room with Abraham Stone after one of these meetings, I asked him if he didn't agree that some sort of regional demarcation and grouping should be considered which could take some of the weight off the London Office and encourage local initiatives. He said he agreed. As we walked down the hotel corridor one of us suggested that a beginning might be made with three such regions; one for Europe centred in London, another for Asia centred in Bombay and another for the Americas centred in New York. Two or three days later a plenary meeting was held in the same large Jehangir Hall; but this was sparsely attended compared with the packed inaugural celebration. Mrs. Sanger had asked me to preside and from a platform I put various issues to the vote. All were passed with little discussion. I was about to terminate the proceedings when Abraham, who was sitting in the

front below me, said: "What about those regions?" I was not prepared for this and asked him if he thought it was in order to bring the matter up then. He said he thought it was quite in order. So I outlined the proposal, and put it to the meeting. It was carried without a dissentient. That, I suppose, is how important decisions are sometimes taken in the early and formative stages of many movements.

In the following years, 1953, another six-day international conference (the fourth since 1946) was held, again in Stockholm. Its theme was *Population and World Resources in Relation to the Family*. Here there were gathered together in committee representatives of ten countries. We met daily, out of conference hours, during the six days. An approved Constitution and Governing Body resulted. These were prolonged and rather difficult meetings. I was appointed chairman in which office I was much assisted by six "observers" among whom were Mr. Tom Griessemer and Mrs. Harriet Pilpel, both legal experts, whom I then met for the first time. Many have been the happy encounters I have since had with Tom. I may perhaps say something about our task. At Bombay the previous year, Mrs. Sanger had asked me to prepare a draft of a constitution for consideration at Stockholm. Mrs. Houghton and I worked on such a draft which was ready by the following April. I thought it proper, as a first step, to submit this draft to our presidents, Mrs. Sanger and Lady Rama Rau. There resulted some useful suggestions which were embodied in a second draft. This was circulated to various countries whose F.P.A.s were to send representatives to the conference. When, in Stockholm, we sat down twenty-four strong (eighteen people with power to vote and six observers) we had before us the second draft above-mentioned and lists of comments, criticisms and suggested amendments from India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sweden and West Germany. Several of these suggested amendments were incompatible and, what with linguistic difficulties, you can imagine, I am sure, that it was not easy to produce an agreed version. But the co-operation of everyone concerned was excellent; a vague mistrustfulness which seemed to hover at the outset was changed in the course of the meetings into general friendliness and the task was just accomplished within the assigned time limits. The most difficult lap in the course was to evolve an agreed version of our *Aims*. Mrs. Houghton and I produced a third draft which we later submitted to Mr. Griessemer and Mrs. Pilpel to be polished and dressed in legally acceptable phrasing. Throughout this meeting, I was conscious of, and grateful for, the happy way that the American and British representatives worked together.

Thus was the Governing Body of the I.P.P.F. constituted. There have since been modifications of the original Stockholm version to meet expected developments and expansions.

A decision of major importance taken at Stockholm was the establishment of a fourth region. The Asian region, centred on India, which had been approved the year before, was split into two—a Central Asian Region (then-called) comprising India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma; and a then-called Western Pacific Region (centred at Singapore) including the other Asian countries then interested. Two other full members of the Federation were elected—the Association in South Africa and in Finland; and Australia's was added to Japan's organization as an Associate member. This meeting in Stockholm demonstrated to us all how great was the honour and affection in which Mrs. Ottesen Jensen was held in her own country.

To the world conference held in Rome the following year (1954), and to the second meeting of the Governing Body afterwards held in that city, I have already alluded.

The Last Decade (1955-1964)

We now come to recent times of which many here know as much as I. Three important figures have appeared on the scene to guide the Federation—Mr. George Cadbury, Dr. Alan Guttmacher and Mr. Cass Canfield. Mr. and Mrs. Cadbury have travelled widely and have produced reports on the countries visited in the course of these travels. These reports, as Rufus Day for one will testify, have been invaluable to those responsible for deciding where to give help and how to give it. I have seen enough of Dr. Guttmacher to appreciate how great is his authority and to realize what an asset to us he is going to be. And I can say the same of Mr.

Canfield who is now chairman of the Governing Body. But I continue my story.

In 1955 a big conference was held in Tokyo and the Governing Body again met. Here began the participation in our conferences of physiologists and research workers whose presence has been an increasingly important feature of later occasions. Prominent in Tokyo were Dr. Gregory Pincus, Dr. Warren Nelson, Sir Solly Zuckerman and Dr. Alan Parkes. Shortly before the Tokyo conference, Mr. Jerome Fisher (U.S.A.), till then joint treasurer with Mr. Aird Whyte (U.K.), had, to our chagrin, suddenly died. Through a most fortunate turn of events there stepped into his place Mr. Rufus Day. With increasing assets later accruing through the initiatives of Mr. Hugh Moore and others, our finances were becoming realistic. Less was heard of shoestrings. At successive meetings of the Governing Body Mr. Day presented masterly statements and recommendations. After a preliminary meeting of a finance committee, he would report on the assets available for disposal; and then, taking account on the one hand of the Federation's basic needs (such as the Headquarters Office, the regional organizations and the News Sheet) and on the other of the applications for grants from member-organizations, he would gear the demands to the resources in a list of recommended allocations. I have listened at these meetings with unfailing admiration, amounting sometimes to wonder, to his measured and lucid expositions. He so combines an understanding of priorities with mastery of detail and fairness of judgement that his recommendations have invariably been accepted with minimum debate. In this way we have most mercifully been spared awkward discussions of intricate issues over which disruptive partisanship could easily be evoked. Mr. Day's skill and wisdom, and those of Sir Jeremy Raisman, Mr. Aird Whyte's successor as Treasurer in the U.K., have piloted the ship into protected waters of financial security. Mr. Day has done the steersmanship; Mr. Hugh Moore and others have provided the fuel.

After 1955, conferences of widening scope were held in New Delhi during 1959 and in Singapore during 1962. The Governing Body met after these conferences and also in Berlin during 1957 and at The Hague in 1960. During this period the I.P.P.F. took on its present form. There were four member-organizations in 1946; there are now some thirty-five members of different categories. Our expansion has, I think, fairly closely matched the growth of public interest in the population explosion and in its possible remedies. The campaigns against hunger and want have provided effective reminders that mere food, however abundant, is no permanent solution. The accelerating growth of world population has provided the theme of many national and international conferences whose proceedings are published in an increasing spate of volumes which are apt to find their way to the desks of a small band of wearying reviewers. The discovery of the pill, an event which our successors may be tempted to call epoch-making, belongs to this last decade. So does the improvement in mutual understanding between the world's religious faiths. So do the money-raising campaigns conducted in our respective countries. Yours has from the start been the I.P.P.F.'s main financial mainstay; and you were the first to embark on a major appeal. Personalities from your country, moreover, have crossed the Atlantic to stimulate and advise us on how to make our U.K. appeal. I have particularly in mind Mr. Cass Canfield. Further co-operation between our two countries developed during this last decade. Mr. Cadbury's assignments and activities since 1960 provide an example. To tell the truth, I am not sure if Mr. Cadbury is now an Englishman or a Canadian. He may be both. But he won't, I am sure, mind being treated for my purpose as an Englishman. Another example is surely the appointment this year of Sir Colville Deverell as the I.P.P.F.'s Secretary-General. If he is with us to-day, I confidently wish him well in your country.

About the years after Tokyo (1955) I am no better qualified to speak than many younger men and women of your own country. Among those I have in mind are Mrs. Brush, Mrs. Ferguson, Mr. Day and Mr. Griessemer. I hope that you will induce one of these to write a history of the Federation's expansion as seen from the New World.

I finish on a personal note. I take this fine opportunity which you have been good enough

to provide for me of paying tributes to some of the Americans with whom this movement has brought me into contact. I have mentioned Mrs. Sanger who will always remain our presiding genius. I thank, also, Mrs. Brush and Mrs. Watumull. Mrs. Brush has influenced her Foundation to support the I.P.P.F. during what we may call its lean beginnings. I have mentioned how the generosity of the Brush Foundation sustained the London Office over many years. Mrs. Brush herself ably edited the monthly news sheet (now called the *International Planned Parenthood News*) till 1957 when it was taken over by my old friend Dr. L. N. Jackson. She has continued to provide financial support. She also served as Honorary Adviser on Field Work from 1957 to 1960 and in this capacity travelled widely on behalf of the Federation and Mrs. Sanger. Lastly I am personally endebted to Mrs. Brush for inviting me in 1959 to Cleveland where I received memorable hospitality from her old friend Mrs. Roslyn Weir.

I also pay a tribute to Dr. William Vogt whom I first met at Bombay in 1952, whose books I have read with admiration and for whom I have much affection and sympathy; to Mr. Joseph Van Vleck with whom I have held many stimulating discussions in New Delhi, Singapore and elsewhere; and to Mrs. Frances Ferguson whose unusually sensible contributions to committee discussions I have admired from 1952 onwards as much as I have appreciated her kindness when she put me up in New York five years ago.

This account has not been easy to prepare. There was so much to say about so many events. There are numerous and grievous omissions for which I hope I will be forgiven. But my difficulties in deciding what to leave out will be apparent to you. May I conclude by thanking you for the honour you have done me in inviting me to address your Conference.